

SPACE TIME TODAY

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Appropriate step

Although there might be some justifiable reasons for not making every detail of the plans relating to security operations public, withholding other information regarding the government's fight against insurgency and financial management in the task of upgrading security forces is not easily understandable.

The parliamentary State Affairs Committee's decision to summon the Prime Minister, Home and Finance ministers along with their secretaries to discuss issues relating to complications surrounding affairs of the state against the backdrop of ongoing terrorist activities is an appropriate step at this time. People from most quarters have come to increasingly feel that there is overall lack of clarity regarding the government's intentions and also in relation to specific measures the government is adopting to meet the soaring financial costs of fighting the insurgency. In addition, the government has some explanations to render on how funds that have been diverted from the development budget and other sources are being used.

Particularly since the declaration of emergency five months ago, the much-advocated themes of transparency and accountability have been relegated to near complete non-importance in the running of state affairs. At the same time, it is being commonly accepted that the government's functioning as well as its fight against the insurgency have not been satisfactory enough to lift the country out from the deep crises it is confronted with at present.

SAC's summoning of the Prime Minister and other two key ministers should not end up being merely a ritualistic exercise. Although there might be some justifiable reasons for not making every detail of the plans relating to security operations public, withholding other information regarding the government's fight against insurgency and financial management in the task of upgrading security forces is not easily understandable. The parliamentary committee should hold full-scale discussions with the Prime Minister and the two key ministers on the ways that will address widespread complaints about the lack of transparency and accountability in the government's functioning. This has become even more important in view of the prospects of sizable financial assistance coming from external sources such as the United States for procuring weapons to fight the insurgents in the near future. SAC is summoning the Finance Minister, according to reports, to seek his explanation of the procedure being applied to recruit permanent staff in the Agriculture Development Bank. There has apparently been suspicion that the existing rules and regulations are being sidelined in the process. SAC's summoning of the Prime Minister along with the Home and Finance ministers can also prove beneficial to the government in that this could help it overcome some difficulties as well as overcome shortcomings in carrying out its task. The government must, however, clarify things well enough and listen to any advice likely to come from SAC.

Dissolution of NBL Board

Was it to cover up NRB's mistakes and negligence?

By Narayan B. Nakarmi

Nepal Rashtira Bank (NRB), the country's central bank, ultimately dissolved Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) Board on March 15, 2002 for no solid reason to pave way for the eventual transfer of NBL management to Ireland based ICC Bank PLC though the then NBL Board was guaranteeing it would improve NBL's condition damaged by the previous government board. People are criticizing the bank management handover.

According to banking sources, a three-member management committee led by Basudev Joshi a former NRB official, has been formed to carry on with bank's daily routine tasks and to submit a financial audit report to NRB. Gopal Rajbakhsh, a chartered accountant, and Bhagat Bista, a former NRB employee, are the other committee members. The tenure of the management committee has been fixed at one year and it can be extended on the basis of the audit report. The newly formed committee decided to hand over the NBL management to Irish Banking PLC on the same day as the NBL Board dissolution. The new committee was formed at the request of Finance Minister (FM) Ram Sharan Mahat, since he had to fly to Mexico to attend the WB meeting. It is said that all these happened following the FM's intervention. He apparently requested board members to resign to make the NBL management handover easy as it is at the heart of the government's financial sector reforms.

Accordingly, majority of directors of the then NBL Board resigned even before the decision. Rajendra Khetan, director of the dissolved NBL Board, stated that all had loans were granted during the government majority turned bad after the private sector gained majority in 1999, and they are making tremendous efforts to realize the overdue loans. The results were satisfactory. So, there are no reasons for dissolving the NBL Board. He also recommended a three-point agenda to the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee for improving NBL on March 14, 2002 and made a fervent plea for a parliamentary or judicial investigation on causes and factors that led to the deteriorating financial

health of two of the largest banks in the country.

A veteran lawyer and another director of the dissolved NBL Board Lok Bhakta Rana charged NRB saying it had initiated such stern action in order to hide its weaknesses. He insisted that NRB should share the blame for being silent for many years till the loan turned bad. He also added that the NRB letter was confusing and did not mention specifically which directives have been violated by NBL. It is inexplicable that the NRB initiated action against NBL Board even before receipt of the follow up committee report.

Rana said, "Since, the central

Performance of the dissolved NBL Board was not unsatisfactory, as NRB has portrayed. This can be judged from facts expressed separately by both the incumbent and former governors of NRB during discussion at PAC.

bank's directives are perplexing, it is difficult to ascertain which of the specific directives were violated, if any? It has been established that the clarification sought is legally flawed and NRB has no legal standing to dissolve NBL Board." He also alleged it was done just to make the World Bank (WB) happy as WB is using its political and economic clout to force the central bank to dissolve the NBL Board to save a foreign company's vested interests.

"How in the world do you expect us to comment on the so-called monitoring committee and clarify the issue raised therein when we just have not received the report?" an irate ex-board member said. "Asking the board to clarify issues not known to it is not only unfair but also unjust."

Likewise, the NBL management claimed they have not even received a copy of the monitoring committee's report that is believed to have recommended the board's dissolution.

Though an NBL member conceded their AGM has not taken place, "there is no precedence recommending dissolution of a bank's board just because the meeting had been delayed."

Notwithstanding the fact that its deputy governor on the NBL Board has always represented the central bank, the alleged "financial problems" arose. Incumbent Deputy Governor Ram Babu Pant, who now heads NRB Banking Operation Department, was a member of NBL for two years.

Sources in the banking sector argued that in the light of these "serious lapses" on part of the central bank, NRB is now hell-bent on dismissing the incumbent NBL board "so as to cover up its own mistakes and negligence".

Some experts also challenged NRB's legal authority to hand over NBL's management to a foreign company as the Commercial Bank Act, 2031, does not provide for such a transfer. The central bank's controversial role, which has itself, to blame for the mess the financial sector is in, raises a question on the success of the current reforms.

Performance of the dissolved NBL Board was not unsatisfactory, as NRB has portrayed. This can be judged from facts expressed separately by both the incumbent and former governors of NRB during discussion at PAC. Records of such deliberations are available with the committee. The letters exchanged between NBL and NRB also corroborate this view.

Despite all these, NRB dissolved NBL Board forcefully portraying its

despotic nature. This confused observers and they suspected the concerned authorities of mounting unnecessary pressure to dissolve NBL Board without solid grounds, for changing the consulting company at the eleventh hour and concluding many things hastily on the same day.

Hence, observers are questioning how the FM, who should have been busy tackling the recent financial crisis in the country arising due to the Maoist insurgency, could manage time for a minor case as bank management handover? What are the reasons behind his personal involvement in it? Is it just to make WB happy or to improve NBL's condition or some other thing? Similarly, how could NRB dissolve NBL Board without solid grounds? Again, if NBL Board was dissolved just to hand over the management to ICC Bank PLC as publicized, why was the newly formed committee's tenure fixed for one year and why were they assigned to prepare the financial audit report? Why was the consulting company changed at the eleventh hour stating ambiguous quotation? Actually, the tender was awarded to Price Water House. Why was the new committee pressurized to conclude many things hastily on the same day the committee was formed? But, none of the above questions were answered satisfactorily, which is surprising.

Again, observers are also surprised at the activities of the dissolved NBL Board members. So, they are raising queries why all ex-members of the dissolved NBL Board, who are criticizing it calling it illegal and claim themselves as clean, resigned, though their investment stakes are high and they have a majority in the board? Again, if they were pressurized and were clean as stated, why have they not initiated legal action for justice and to punish the real culprits?

All these have confused observers. So, they are insisting on bringing out the real fact publicly so that the case does not linger in NRB's case for betterment of the bank and myriads of depositors and investors. Such rumors will benefit no one and will tarnish the bank's image, as CB is a very sensitive organization and run by people's faith.

unconsciously, English literature students, however not all, accomplish other scholarly deeds too.

These and other acts can be grouped into two categories. For the first, I use the term, un-Baconian in that they prefer make private what is public by learning. As a result, some library people do busy making lists of due books by the end of the semester. In the second come gifted species that conduct practically everything Bacon prescribed.

Within the past few years this brand of scholars have increased so much that only a few books have all right to continue this practice due to installation of "electronic gadget" by the library gate. For English literature students to continue, it is necessary to alter old techniques. It now remains to be seen how well newcomers can go about continuing such practice.

Spiritual Groove

Prayer

Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men.

John F. Kennedy
Hold yourself in prayer before God, like a dumb or paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate; let it be your business to keep your mind in the presence of God.

Br Lawrence

Preaching
The preacher's garment is cut according to the pattern of that of the hearers for the most part.

Oliver Wendell Holmes
For the preaching of the cross is to them, that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.

Holy Bible

Prophecy
The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Holy Bible

Providence
Men almost universally have acknowledged a providence, but that fact has no force to destroy natural aversion and fears in the presence of events.

George Santayana
Dear God, we pray not that wrecks should happen, but if it be Thy will that they do, we pray Thee let them be for the benefit of Thy poor people of Sicily.

Parson Troutbeck

LETTERS

Complete insanity

It is quite natural to believe that where the stream of reason dies out in the land of false beliefs and extreme means, nothing fruitful can be expected. Weighing the pros and cons of one's actions before going on with it is a thing normally attributed to human beings. But what have been witnessing is neither reasonable nor justifiable.

To try and disrupt normal activity for five whole days cannot be justified on any grounds simply because it has not benefited any quarter. Even those that called the bandh would have nothing to boast of apart from the fear and discontent they infused in the minds of people. This way what terrorists want will ever prove a mirage. It would be surprising if they still have the guts to call their activities people's war for people will never advocate war.

The nation is the ultimate loser, but expecting people to realize this will be a far cry. It may be hoped that through some divine grace sanity will dawn upon them and they will give up arms.

Rajesh Maharjan
Kathmandu

A nobility, now difficult to continue

By Khagendra Acharya "Badr"

Even weeks after getting membership of Central Library Kirtipur, firstly, accessing required books and later using them apply for newcomers is a headache. One needs to learn among many Dr. Johnson's life history, Tolstoy's biographies and Francis Bacon's 'Of Studies' each advising differently. Dr. Johnson's life history makes clear how voluminous books like *Critical Theory since Plato* that MA English students carry can be successfully applied in case an enemy challenges him. More personal advice could be inferred from Tolstoy's biography. It reads he used to carry Taitel's dictionaries in outstretched hands to test physical endurance. Francis Bacon's 'Of Studies' advises you to test, swallow or chew and digest. Nonetheless, like one, you would wonder why many students prefer memorizing and bringing Bacon's principles apply into practice.

To my wonder, a friend of mine reasoned, "Because it is doubly beneficial. If the act fails, no harm befalls and if it succeeds, the desire to handle materials privately is easily fulfilled." Theoretically too, it is correct to be guided by noble principles," he added. I agreed as he despised my alternative photo copying - a ridiculous due to money plus time expenses. "Easiest is tearing the pages as no art requires less training." It could easily be accomplished, rarely detected and heavily benefiting.

Is it this 'benefit' principle that inspires many students to accomplish their deeds then? I could not be sure. Had I a politician's wisdom, I would certainly have become certain.

Moreover, it would have been possible to say whether other department's students benefit from Bacon's principles. Just to state empirical reality, though obvious to many, Bacon's suggestions, even after four hundred years of his death are rightly practiced.

Are you still unable to comprehend? If so, stop straining cells. Only consider Bacon's terms (testing, swallowing or chewing and digesting) and compare them with tearing or taking and stuffing pages (dead) on English books from the Central Library. Surely, the matter becomes clear and your intelligence says Bacon's advice differs very thinly in character from what students perform.

Truly speaking, consciously or

Spice-time

Teaching license: Needed, but won't work

By Raaz

I still recall some five-six years back, I was hardly a lad of 18 when I arrived in Kathmandu (I had just completed my ISC, and wanted to do something to support myself). A month later, I found myself teaching in a school, a private boarding school, notwithstanding my resolve during my early student life that I would never ever become a teacher.

I don't really remember what I taught, or for that matter, what the students learned; what I realize now, however, is that it served a dual purpose. For one, a jobless youth, that is me, got a job to hang on to (though I fully realized even daily wages earned more than what I was given then), and the school found a 'cheap teacher' in me, who also fitted well within the school budget.

This, as is an open truth, is not the story of one school only. Save for a few schools, even those that claim to be well-established, resort to hiring such cheap teachers. The quality of teaching-learning process being the ultimate victim.

Recently I came to hear about

reports that teachers would now be required to obtain a teaching license, and even the ones already in the profession would be required to take a test, interview. Had this been so some five years back, I wonder whether I live a step in the right direction. On the face of it, barring the possibility that ineffective implementation would render it ineffective, it now seems only those that are qualified enough will be able to take up the job. Also, one can say, this will help check the use of fake certificates, at least in the education sector.

Let's now face the other side of the coin. First and foremost, licensing of teachers is not like giving driving license to people, for one it is not a mechanical task that can be tested between some carefully placed poles or an L-shaped parking slot. Even acquiring driving license demands: ample training and knowledge of certain rules and regulations; but here the system has no mention of whether or not one needs to

have undergone any sort of training. The matter at hand becomes all the more complicated for when the question of how they will be trained is considered, which is, if by some alien gear it dawns upon policy makers that training in child psychology and teaching methodology is a requirement that cannot be easily done away with.

In the absence of any pre-training, it would be quite hard to gauge how good a teacher an individual would prove once inside the classroom in front of the class in just a short interview session.

But this is what the licensing mechanism aims to do. What would be the other criteria? One's academic certificates alone cannot be a person's true measure for it is said that a good student need not always make a good teacher, as there are things like understanding of child psychology and what education pundits call teaching aptitude, which also goes into it.

Let's, for the time being, consider, notwithstanding all the odds against the licensing body, however unlikely it

may seem, the team can go about with the licensing task. This would mean judging not only new aspirants but also the ones already in the profession. When this is done, would the team, or body, treat private and public school teachers equally? What about teachers who have come in from neighboring India, or any other country? What will the team do if it comes across a teacher who is already in the profession, but who fails to satisfy its required criteria? These are questions that are not answered yet. Can this bring any uniformity in the private schools pay the teachers?

Problems would be numerous if one is to dig in deeper. Most people take to teaching not as a profession but as something they do till they finish their study to look for better and more fruitful alternatives. Should such people be given the license to teach?

As such, what can be termed a step in the right direction could come across a crossroad from where it could be lost. For here we have what can be termed the Aegean Stable, which demands nothing less than a Herculean effort.

CARTOON CORNER

